

floor until they collapse just to preserve their right to offer an amendment on behalf of their State are either confused or being dishonest.

During the Trump administration, reporters routinely sprinkled the word falsely in the descriptions of things that President Trump said as sort of a running fact-check. Reporters ought to revise the practice of using the word falsely when President Biden and other Democrats make demonstrably false statements. This issue, of course, would be a good place to start—and do it this week.

Any reference to some nonexistent, totally mythical age of the talking filibuster ought to have a disclaimer that no such requirement ever existed for a 60-vote cloture rule. As I mentioned, conventional wisdom about the filibuster has been distorted by confusion and perhaps intentional shell games.

For Senators or reporters to truly understand this issue, I urge you to consult the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service as your main source.

RUSSIA

Madam President, on my last topic, Russian dictator Vladimir Putin once famously called the collapse of the Soviet Union “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century.” That ought to tell you very much. He regrets the collapse of the evil empire that killed, that tortured, and that repressed millions of Russians, and he is in the process of trying to reconstitute that empire by threatening Russia’s neighbors, regardless of the wishes of the people he seeks to rule over.

Putin is on the precipice of greatly escalating his war on Ukraine, upset that Ukrainians, as is their right, increasingly seek to leave the Soviet past behind them and reclaim their European heritage. Ukraine wants to renew historic ties with their western neighbor while building democracy and the rule of law.

Now, we saw over the week, particularly this weekend, Putin sending troops into Kazakhstan at the invitation of that country’s allied dictator to repress an unexpected popular uprising.

All this empire building rests on convincing the Russian people that despite their misery and his misrule, Putin is restoring Russia’s past glory, just like they could have a good economic future based on that past glory.

Now, this work of Putin requires a war on history. Putin recently gave a speech absurdly claiming Ukraine is not a real country, based on ignoring—or, rather, Russia’s co-opting—the much older history of civilization in Ukraine.

He has also rehabilitated the memory of the sadistic mass murderer Joseph Stalin. There is a book about how Putin’s Russia views the Stalinist past. Its title says it all. The title of the book is “It Was a Long Time Ago, and It Never Happened Anyway.” Now they have taken action in recent weeks to make sure that history of Russia’s past, particularly the abuse of its popu-

lation, never is known. And I will cover that in just a minute.

Stalin’s horrific crimes against the Russian people are a big obstacle to Putin’s narrative about the Soviet Union, as part of some sort of a proud Russian imperial tradition. So it comes as no surprise that Putin’s regime has forced the closure of a respected Russian human rights organization dedicated to the truth—the truth—about the victims of Soviet communism.

The independent human rights organization known as Memorial was co-founded by Nobel Peace Prize winner Andrei Sakharov in the waning days of the Soviet Union. Sakharov was a brave dissident who risked everything to call attention to the evils of the Soviet system. As some of my colleagues may recall, I led the effort in this U.S. Senate to name the street in front of the old Soviet Embassy in his Honor—Sakharov Plaza.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, Sakharov embodied the hope of a brighter, more democratic future for all of Russia, built on understanding and reckoning with its past.

The forced closure of Memorial after decades of noble work to bring awareness and to bring healing around the victims of Soviet communism is emblematic of the state of Putin’s Russia, but not the state of the Russian people. Moreover, the next day, he moved even further in this direction of trying to rewrite history or stop the truth from coming out. Putin shut down the separate but related Memorial Human Rights Center, which focused on political prisoners this very day who are being abused under Putin’s regime. This is a major setback for what is left of Russia’s civil society that started to emerge out of the wreckage of communism.

A robust civil society will be essential if Russia is ever to become a free, prosperous modern nation. Today, only President Putin stands in the way of that accomplishment.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, in recent years, our Democratic colleagues have taken their Washington-knows-best approach to governing to new and, frankly, frightening levels.

Our colleagues have tried to give the IRS unprecedented authority and manpower to snoop into the finances of virtually every American, not just what you make but how you spend your money.

They have attempted to control what type of childcare families can access,

saying that if it is faith-based, that it is not going to qualify for the extravagant subsidies they have proposed, and are driving up the costs for average, hard-working Texas families.

When it comes to our Democratic colleagues and their Washington-knows-best attitude, they have tried to force every person in this country into a one-size-fits-all healthcare system that, yes, government controls. They have argued that the President of the United States has the power to force all Americans, including those in the private sector, to get a vaccine regardless of whether they have naturally occurring antibodies as a result of having gotten COVID-19.

Now, they are mounting a Federal takeover of America’s State-run elections. That is what we will be talking about a lot this week.

As I said, this is consistent with this attitude that Washington knows best, not parents, not teachers, not business owners, not the workers, not even Governors, mayors, sheriffs, city councils, or local election officials. No. Washington knows best, is their attitude.

To state the obvious, that is not how the United States of America was designed under our Constitution. During the time of the founding, there was a lot of discussion of whether to have a national government or whether to have a Federal Government with the States as sovereign entities, subject only to national laws when the Federal Government preempted them with things like the Voting Rights Act, section 5. In fact, our very form of government was designed with checks and balances and dispersed authority primarily to protect the individual freedom of “we the people.”

Our Founders had the wisdom to devise a system of government comprised of three separate branches—coequal—to ensure that no single person or single institution became too powerful because, again, they viewed it as, the more powerful that single entity or single institution became, the less accountable they would be to the people and the less freedom we would have to conduct our own lives as we see fit.

But, as we know, it is not just distributed laterally among the various branches; it is distributed vertically as well. The Constitution makes clear that the States retain all authority not delegated to the Federal Government. That is the Tenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Of course, the power given to the States is sometimes set forth explicitly. For example, the Constitution gives the States the authority to set the time, place, and manner of elections. That is in the Constitution itself. Others are reserved under the Tenth Amendment.

Now, make no mistake, the Federal Government has very, very important responsibilities. When it comes to our national defense, when it comes to regulating interstate commerce, international diplomacy, setting taxes,

managing our national debt and deficits, the Federal Government should and must take the lead. But this is simply not a monarchy. It is not an authoritarian form of government that we see in other parts of the world. Our government is not top-down; it is bottom-up when it comes to the distribution of powers. The Federal Government was not designed to authorize anyone, including the President of the United States, the authority to hand down sweeping mandates for the people of this country.

Thomas Jefferson famously said, “The government closest to the people serves the people best,” and that is how he described the benefits of this bottom-up form of government rather than top-down, Washington-knows-best form of government that our Democratic colleagues seem to embrace almost across the board. For everything from healthcare to elections, our colleagues across the aisle have attempted to make prescriptive decisions against every State, city, and community across the country. By “prescriptive decisions,” I mean to tie the hands or to say “jump” and expect the States and local governments to ask “how high?”

But we are already beginning to see cracks in this strategy. When it has become clear that Washington doesn’t really know best, the Democrats have another idea: Blame somebody else. Just look at the Federal Government’s response to the pandemic of COVID-19. President Biden ran on a promise of a strong pandemic response by the Federal Government. He promised to make free testing widely available. He pledged to stop the misinformation that has led to widespread confusion about the virus, and he has vowed that public health decisions would be made by public health professionals and would not be based on political considerations.

Looking back, it is clear the American people were sold snake oil. As folks across the country can attest, free testing may exist, but you can’t find an appointment to get one of those tests. Rapid tests are in short supply, and even then, the cost is too high for many families.

The information coming from the Centers for Disease Control is providing the American people with more questions than answers. In the words of one New York Times columnist, “The highest-ranking public health officials are making statements that seem more aimed at covering up or making excuses for ongoing failures rather than leveling with the public.”

The administration has sided with political allies instead of the science. Last February, the CDC released a report that said schools are not breeding grounds for COVID-19, and as long as precautions are taken, schools can reopen safely. That was last February. But the science was at odds with the demands of teachers unions, so the administration refused to encourage

State and local leaders to reopen their schools.

So how is the President reacting in light of these broken promises and a failed pandemic response?

In a debate in October 2020, then-Candidate Biden talked about the previous administration’s pandemic response and the fact that more than 220,000 Americans had died. That was in October of 2020. He said anyone who is responsible for that many deaths should not remain President of the United States.

Well, today, we have lost more than 830,000 of our fellow Americans to this virus. That is nearly three times as many deaths as there were under the previous President’s watch, but President Biden isn’t stepping down. In fact, now he claims the Federal Government isn’t even responsible. Just a couple of weeks ago, President Biden pushed responsibility on to the States, saying there is no Federal solution; this gets solved at the State level. This is enough to give you whiplash—the radically changing, diametrically opposed positions of this administration and the President of the United States.

As it turns out, our colleagues only want Big Government when Big Government is consistent with their political objectives. If the promise of a strong Federal response to a deadly pandemic can help them win an election, well, they are all for it, but when they fail to plan and execute a strong response, they are quick to pass the responsibility and the blame on to someone else.

Well, our Federal form of government isn’t a system that can be gamed to benefit politicians when it is convenient and skirt responsibility when things go awry, but, unfortunately, that looks like where we are today, and the Democrats clearly view the calculus as leaning in their favor when it comes to their election takeover bills that we will be voting on this week.

Our colleagues have made repeated attempts to overhaul our Nation’s elections and give the Federal Government unprecedented power to manage America’s elections.

There was a Pew poll taken on November 20, 2020, asking people whether they found, in the election, it was easy or hard to vote, and 94 percent of the respondents said they found it either extremely easy or easy to vote—94 percent in the last election of November 2020.

In Texas, we had 11.3 million people vote—66 percent of registered voters—which was a consistent percentage across the country. There were historic turnouts in the election. Yet our Democratic colleagues want to fix a system that is not broken because it allows everyone, of every political stripe, of every race, of every ethnicity, and of every background, an equal opportunity to cast a ballot.

In Texas, you can vote for up to 2 weeks before election day itself, in person—2 weeks. The Justice Department

has sued Texas, saying that it somehow discriminates against people getting access to the ballot. That is a lawsuit that the Justice Department will lose because the facts simply do not demonstrate it.

Again, 94 percent of the people in this Pew poll of November 20, 2020, after the last election, said they found it either extremely easy or easy to cast their ballot. So our Democratic colleagues are simply flying into a headwind when it comes to their argument that, somehow, it is not easy to cast your ballot.

But there are some places where it is easier to vote than in others. For example, it is easier to vote in Georgia and in Texas under current law than it has been in the President’s State of Delaware, which, until this year, did not allow any early voting in person. You don’t hear the majority leader and you don’t hear Democratic colleagues talking about States like Delaware, which offered, until this year, zero opportunity for early voting in person; whereas Texas and Georgia, even after the election reforms they passed, still offer 2 weeks of early in-person voting.

So our Democratic colleagues’ explanation has changed over time. They argue that Washington knows best and that all of the State-run elections should be subsumed into a Federal system of elections. At one point, they said it was a matter of election security. Then they said: Well, no; it is really about voter confidence. Then they said, which is, I think, their current position, that only a national system can remove obstacles that prevent people from voting.

Well, when I said this was a solution in search of a problem, I was referring to that November 20, 2020, poll wherein 94 percent of the respondents said they found it easy to vote or very easy to vote. Clearly, again, our Democratic colleagues are looking for a problem or have offered a solution in search of a problem.

Among the proposals they have made, this is not about just making it easier to vote and harder to cheat; they are saying that this is somehow in response to the horrific attacks that occurred on the Capitol on January 6 of last year. They just keep throwing the spaghetti on the wall to see what sticks. For example, among the many proposed changes that they have offered, they say they want to turn the bipartisan Federal Election Commission into a Democratic-controlled, partisan commission, and then they want to seize the authority given under the Constitution for the States to draw their own congressional lines, instead handing all power to an unelected and unaccountable redistricting commission.

They have also tried to mandate ballot harvesting on the States—a practice that allows paid campaign staff and political operatives to collect mail-in ballots, to perhaps go by the local nursing home and collect ballots from folks in the nursing home and to

turn them in. This has been shown to be a recipe for mischief and election fraud. Yet they want to institutionalize it, and they want to say that the States cannot prohibit it.

These proposals would do more to protect our Democratic colleagues' jobs than to safeguard American voting rights.

What really concerns me and, I imagine, the American people as they learn more and more about what is in these bills is how much damage the Democratic Party is willing to do in order to secure a partisan victory. Not only are our colleagues trying to seize the authority given under the Constitution to the States to manage their own elections, they are willing to take a wrecking ball to the U.S. Senate itself and particularly the Senate rules. Somehow, protecting the foundation of our democracy has turned into ignoring the Constitution and blowing up this institution.

I need to clarify that not all 50 Senate Democrats are on board with this plan. Thank goodness, two of our colleagues have been clear in their outright opposition to eliminating or weakening the filibuster—the requirement that legislation, before it passes, must have bipartisan support rather than purely partisan bills like our Democratic colleagues want to pass without any support on the Republican side.

While there are two of our Senate colleagues from West Virginia and Arizona who have been public about their opposition to blowing up the Senate and to breaking Senate rules in order to accomplish a partisan objective, I imagine there are others unnamed who share the same concerns privately.

I hope our friends on the other side of the aisle will remain steadfast in their commitment to our Constitution and the norms and rules of this institution. If our colleagues are willing to go this far in the pursuit of raw political power, I would hate to think about how they would use it if they were to succeed.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ELECTIONS

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, when Tennesseans go to the polls and cast their vote, they do so with the hope that the person whose name appears on their ballot will do what is best for their community. They expect that person to show respect for the Constitution and the rule of law and to protect the integrity of our most important institutions.

The people place a great deal of trust in us, and I don't think it is too much

to ask that we return the favor by recognizing that there are limits to how far the Federal Government can expand its reach. Many of my Democratic colleagues, however, would disagree with me on that premise. They returned to Washington this week ready to squander the people's trust on yet another power grab.

The election bill they are prepared to break the Senate rules to pass has failed multiple times, under multiple titles, and in different packaging. This has gone on for the last 20 years. But this latest round has one thing in common with all the other drafts that found their rightful place in the trash can: It has nothing to do with protecting the ballot box.

This is not a voting rights bill; it is a sweeping takeover of our democracy and a shocking attack on the constitutional authority of the States to determine the time, place, and manner of elections. That is right. This is not in statute; it is article I, section 4 of the Constitution.

I have said it before. I will say it again. These proposals read like something concocted by someone who has never stepped foot behind the scenes of their local polling place. It is concocted by people who probably have never spent 10 minutes as a poll worker carrying out and implementing an election, and they absolutely have never served a term on a local election commission.

It seems that our friends across the aisle are looking at all of these local elected and appointed officials who work elections and are saying: We think that you just are incapable and inept to carry out an election.

How disrespectful can you be?

The Federal Government has got to come in and save the day and take away the ability of your local elections registrar to carry forward an election.

I hope my colleagues will think about the message that they are sending because there is nothing in these proposals that would help your State and local leaders secure elections, and, in fact, many provisions would actually weaken the checks already in place against voter fraud.

This is the opposite of how it should be. It should be easy to vote and hard to cheat, not the other way around. And the people of this country and elected leaders have been saying no to the Federal takeover of elections for the past 20 years. But here we are again having to once again stand up against this desperate attempt to undermine voters and empower cheats and criminals by mandating ballot harvesting while rejecting voter ID requirements. That is in their bill—got to do it, got to allow ballot harvesting. That is where shenanigans happen.

We can't have voter ID requirements—no, no, no. We don't want anybody at the ballot box having to prove who they are. But be ready to show that ID if you want to get on a plane, if you want to get in a government

building, if you want to go buy a bottle of wine. Be ready to show that ID, prove your age, and prove who you are.

Their bill would also centralize power over elections in the hands of faceless, unaccountable bureaucrats—that is right—not your friends and neighbors working the polls and making decisions and serving on local election commissions. You will never know the people who say, "Hey, you are too stupid to figure out how to run these elections," because the Democrats are going to take all the power and authority away from your local friends and neighbors and send it to bureaucrats here in DC.

And they would embrace a one-size-fits-all rule book that any seasoned election worker knows will throw polling places into chaos.

In my home county in Tennessee, we have people who have worked these polls for years. They are dedicated. They are good people. I don't know their political party. I just know that they show up to make certain that our elections are free and fair, and I appreciate them.

Since the first iteration of this bill reared its head, the American people have seen it for what it is: an activist-driven, power-hungry solution in search of problems that do not exist. That is right; the problems don't exist.

The Democrats want you to believe that America as we know it will end if they don't pass this bill. They are acting like elections are in crisis. But do you know what? I think maybe it is the Democratic Party that is in crisis. They are staring at decades-high inflation, crime spikes, cascading public health failures, a southern border on the verge of collapse, embarrassing approval ratings, infighting so intense that watching the nightly news feels like you are watching a soap opera.

They can't get their arms around COVID. They can't figure it out. I just heard coming over here that the CDC is now going to mandate that insurance companies have to supply home testing kits for all of their enrollees. I mean, yeah, I think it is a party in crisis. And do you know what? The Democrats right now, they are desperate for a distraction. Oh, just give them something to change the narrative. And the benefit of this one, if they could pull this off, is that they won't have to worry about the American people holding them accountable for the fallout because they now will control the ballot process; they will control the election commissions.

And do you know what they are saying to the American public? Your vote doesn't count.

We have treasured one person, one vote. We have treasured fair, free, honest elections. And the Democrats are ready to throw it away for a power grab that is unprecedented and is incredibly disrespectful of the men and women in each of our counties who give of their time and work to hold these elections.

This is more than just another example of partisanship holding the Senate